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MicroTimes™

California's User Oriented Computer Magazine

Computer Concepts and Games Programming with Free Fall's Jon Freeman and Anne Westfall

by Mary Eisenhart and Bennett Falk

Special Software Reviews Section

Jina Becarr: The Woman Behind Love's Computer Laserdisc Programs

Jon Freeman and Anne Westfall. Photo: Richard McCaffrey

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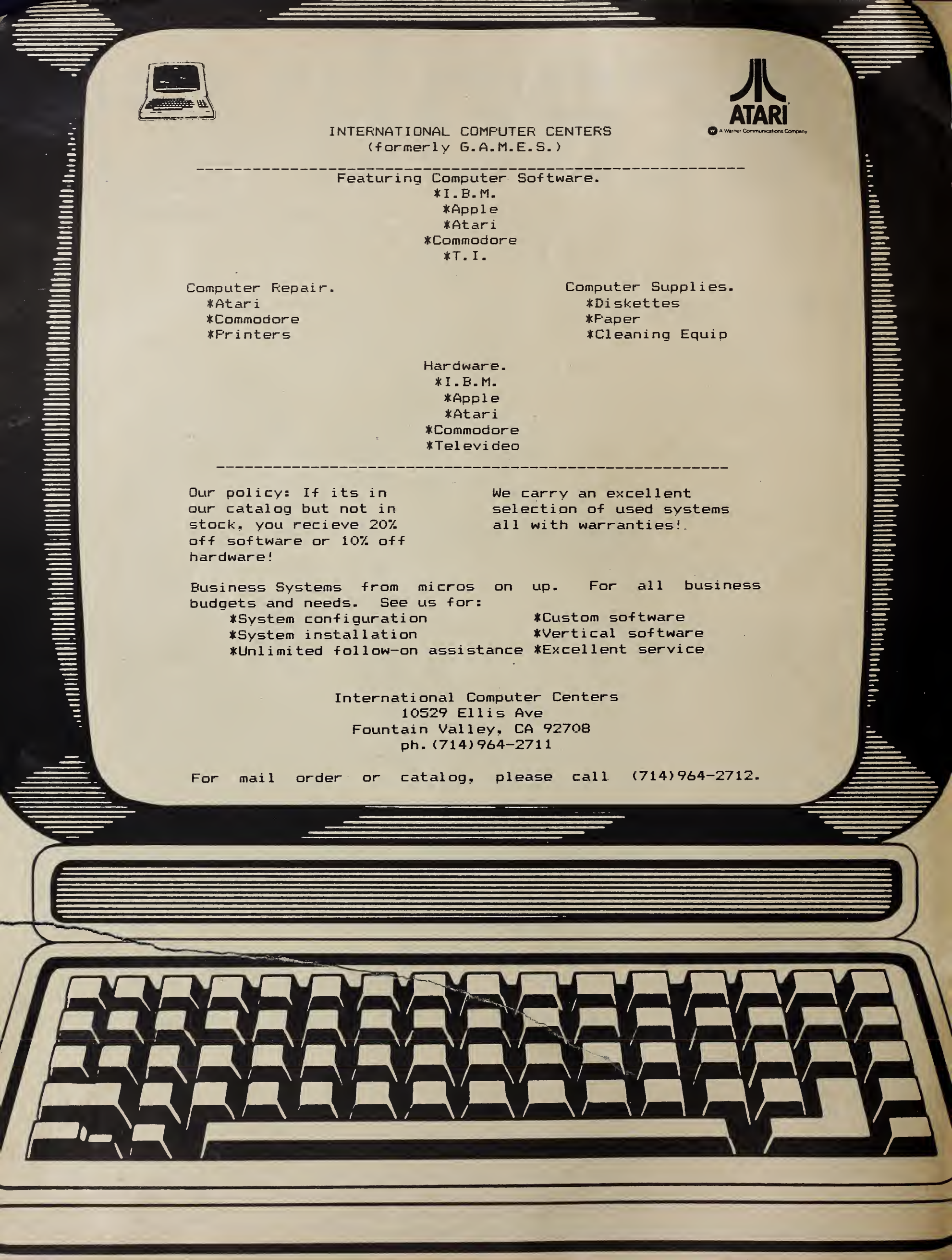

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Enter Microtimes

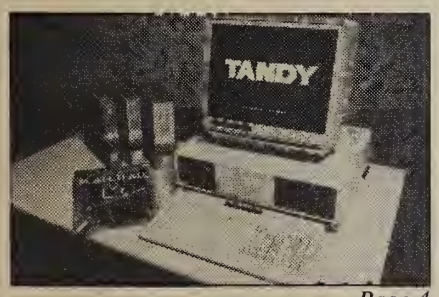
AS CALIFORNIA'S User Oriented Computer Magazine, Microtimes reflects the interests of the ever-evolving community of user groups and individuals devoted to their personal computers. Even though this state is undoubtedly the home of the most advanced computer experts in the world, never before has a magazine existed that links them together and concentrates on regional vs. national trends. Microtimes will fill this need while also offering reviews of current hardware and software, delving into the people behind the latest computer innovations and providing a forum for communication between personal computer users.

The tone of Microtimes is personal and informative. New ideas will be shared and reader response is encouraged. Any topic, person or product associated with the California computer scene will be open for discussion and readers with a desire to contribute computer-oriented articles or photographs now have an outlet in Microtimes.

Also, since the publication is free, no one has to make a decision about whether to pick it up or not. Microtimes will be available to *everyone* who is interested in the California personal computer scene.

In this premier issue, the main focus is on software and programming concepts, with an extensive software review section and an interview with Free Fall's Jon Freeman and Anne Westfall — the people responsible for Archon and other "thinker's video games." Also profiled in this issue is Lisa Becarr, the woman who developed the romantic drama that unfolds on "love's laserdisc" inside a brand new arcade game. Current computer news is covered in Edit Mode and, in the back of the magazine, look for Microtimes' classified marketplace — where users will have an opportunity to buy and sell computers.

Until the next program...



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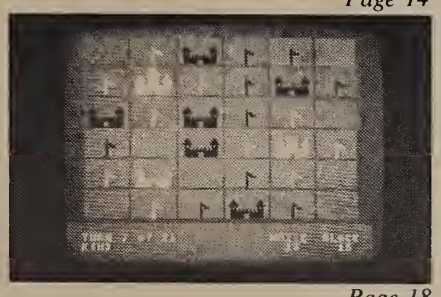
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California's User Oriented Computer Magazine

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EDIT MODE

Briefcase computers on the rise

Several of the top computer manufacturers, including IBM, Tandy, TI, Compaq and NEC, are about to test the waters of the new portable computer market with a wide range of briefcase sized models. Kaypro, whose business computer has dropped down to a $1200 price tag after lagging sales, is expected to introduce a pint-size portable that can run Lotus 1-2-3 and other IBM programs. The new model will have to be connected to a "base station" with disk drives and an IBM format compatible 320x200-pixel monitor. When on the road it will have an LCD 80x16 display two-thirds the size of the standard display, which is quite adequate for most uses. Expect similar products from the other companies in the near future.

Consumer Electronics Show highlights

By Kim Nelson

An air of optimism surrounded this year's winter show in Las Vegas, with many manufacturers unveiling a variety of new, exciting products. Both Atari and Commodore attracted large crowds with their newest releases, while Coleco was on hand to defend its new Adam system and smaller manufacturers provided some of the more interesting software.

In game units, the hot new idea is the 3-D game. Of all the ones I saw, the most impressive was the"3-D Imagger" for Vectrex by GCE. This unit seems to have the best effects and what's more important is that it doesn't bother the eyes after playing a while. My favorite cartridge was "Narrow Escape," in which one pilots a space craft through building-like 3-D structures while shooting at aliens.

Another impressive new game is called "Seven Cities of Gold" by Electronic Arts. I personally played this game for more than an hour, playing the role of a sixteenth century Spanish explorer off to adventure in the New World. The game contains over 10,000 different screens. Still another addicting title was "Fortress" by SSI. This is a strategy game along the lines of "Go" or "Othello." An interesting feature is that the game includes four computer opponents each with a different style of play and a form of "artificial intelligence" in which they actually "learn" from your style of play.

Alpha Syntarri's display looked much like a stylized jungle gym. They demonstrated a new music synthesizer for the Apple IIe in which you could program the sounds of various instruments from a french horn to a violin and then put all the sounds together and make an orchestra. Excellent for the would-be conductor or composer.

In terms of size, Atari's display was the most impressive. Their banks of set-ups were receiving unceasing attention with such new releases as Berserk, Xevious, and Crystal Castles. Underlying this, however, was an exciting new marketing strategy designed to present the new XL series as a viable product in the computer industry, with the introduction of a new line of home business and education software. For the business-minded, the most interesting is a triad of programs made in conjunction with Synapse Software, Inc. Syncalc is a straightforward spreadsheet much like Visicalc only completely menu-driven for ease of operation. Synfilet is a menu-driven database management system with excellent updating features. Syntrend is again, a menu-driven graphics and statistics package. Each of the programs are expected to retail for $99.95 and the best feature is that they are totally integrated with each other and Atariwriter.

The educational outlook also looks bright with upgraded instructional computer languages such as Atari Logo, and personal development like Atari speed-reading and Typo Attack. Finally, Atari had two prototypes of the 145OXLD on display. The units featured a 300 baud direct connect modem, a speech synthesizer which sounded a great deal like S.A.M. from Don't Ask Software, and a built-in double-sided, dual density disk drive with a 364K-byte storage capacity. The unit is scheduled for release in late August or early September.

Apple displayed a new operating system called "ProDos" for the Apple II, IIe, and II+. It's compatible with all 3.3 software and runs approximately four times faster. It also allows the Apple owner to use an optional five megabyte profile hard disk. Price tag is set at $40.00 for existing Apple owners.

Commodore shocked show-goers with two new PCs and a new monitor. The SX64 is a totally portable version of the C64 using a 6510A microprocessor and having its own built-in disk drive and five inch color monitor. The C264 seems destined to become the replacement for the C64. It features improved high-res graphics and plotting, programmable function keys, and an option for on-board software including a word-processor and a spread-

MICROTIMES' TEN BEST

Choosing the ten best games for home computers is not an altogether scientific undertaking, since so many factors come into play. A game which intrigues the more experienced among us may prove tedious and frustrating to a beginner. Likewise, while sales reports give some indication of a game's popularity, they are equally indicative of the effectiveness of packaging designers and marketing strategists. Finally, a game which is heaven on one machine may come across as rather lame on another.

The selection process, therefore, involved weighing sales figures with the opinions of our staff and experts in the field. We invite our readers to send in lists of their favorite software as well, and future issues will also feature lists of the best business and educational software.

ADVENTURE GAMES	STRATEGY GAMES	HOME ARCADE GAMES
Ultima III	Carrier Force	Dimension
Return of Hercules	Fortress	Pinball Construction Set
Space Vikings	M.U.L.E.	Blue Max
Infidel	Archon	Miner II
Standing Stones	Odessta Chess	Beach Head
Wizardry	Normandy	Donkey Kong
S.A.G.A.	Silicon Warrior	London Blitz
Castle Wolfenstein	Diplomacy	Q Bert
Temple of Apshai	Star League Baseball	Seafox
Land of Tomorrow	One on One	Zaxxon

HARDWARE REVIEW

By Don Hamilton

TANDY 2000 — DREAM COMPUTER

The new Tandy 2000 is Radio Shack's answer to the IBM PC and also compares favorably with the new Macintosh. An extremely fast computer, the 2K has a sixteen bit system and a five MHz clock. The color resolution is approximately twice that of the IBM-PC, with color graphics and dot patterns used to create crisp letters and numbers on the screen. Connected to a pedestal that swivels and tilts five to ten degrees, it allows for the best possible viewing angles. The Tandy 2000 is a great leap forward in personal computer design.

sheet. The SX64 should retail for $970.00 and the C264 around $500.00. Both units are somewhat compatible with existing C64 software.

The new 1703 monitor should make a welcome addition to the already excellent Commodore monitor line. It has some graphics and resolution improvements in a stylish case and a price tag of around $300.00. Commodore additionally displayed 87 new software packages, showing their ability to become an important software producer.

Coleco is attempting to relieve the problems and doubts surrounding Adam. They are working to resolve the defect problem and writing a more concise manual. They introduced a 5¼ inch disk drive at the show and are planning an additional digital data drive and a 1200 baud modem for this year. Coleco also announced 100 new software titles slated for release this year.

IBM's Peanut getting lukewarm response

IBM's much anticipated entry into the field of home computers may have caused some concern among Atari and Commodore stockholders at the outset, but sales figures for the new IBM Peanut have been disappointing. At the close of its months on the market, the PC jr. had sold about 10,000. While this would be impressive for most companies, IBM's advertising budget was expected to arouse a more enthusiastic response. Moreover, early reports indicate that other companies are not writing software for the new system as rapidly as expected and it may be that the Peanut will have to come across as more impressive than it currently seems in order to earn its market share.

Apple's controversial ad campaign

Apple's relatively daring advertisements in which a heroic young woman, ostensibly representing Apple, smashes the screen image of Big Brother, a.k.a. IBM, has met with mixed reactions. The personal independence message may be appealing to home computer buyers who are considering the company's Macintosh, but there is concern within the company that corporate clients may actually identify more with the shattered screen than the heroic woman. Time will tell whether Apple's bid for the home computer market will affect their sales in the business market.

Sales wars: Who made the most money?

While Commodore is now the most successful provider of home computers, having their names on about two-fifths of the models sold in 1983, they're still no match for IBM and Tandy when it comes to selling software. The following chart shows the top grossing software makers, along with a breakdown for last year's home computer sales:

SOFTWARE CO.	INCOME RANGE
IBM Tandy	$100 to $130 million
Commodore Apple Atari	$70 to $75 million
Microsoft Texas Instruments Lotus	$50 to $69 million
Digital Research Micropro VisiCorp Ashton-Tate	$40 to $49 million
Peachtree	$23 million
Microfocus	$10 to $15 million

Of the approximate 5 million home computers sold last year, two million of them were Commodores. Second in line was Texas Instruments Inc. with over 1.5 million. Numbers 3, 4, and 5 at about thousand systems were, Atari Inc., Timex and Tandy Corp. The rest of the home market was less than a quarter of a million.

REVIEWS

BROADSIDES

Published by S. S. I.
For use with Apple & Atari

You're standing on the quarter-deck of the second-rate, 74 gun ship "Victory," of which you have just assumed command. "Sail auf da port quarter," barks the lookout. You rush to the side of the ship, next to where the Officer of the Deck is already standing, his telescope scanning the horizon.

"There she is, sir," the first officer exclaims! You bring your scope up and point it in the general direction. After a few seconds search, you can just make out a topsail coming over the horizon.

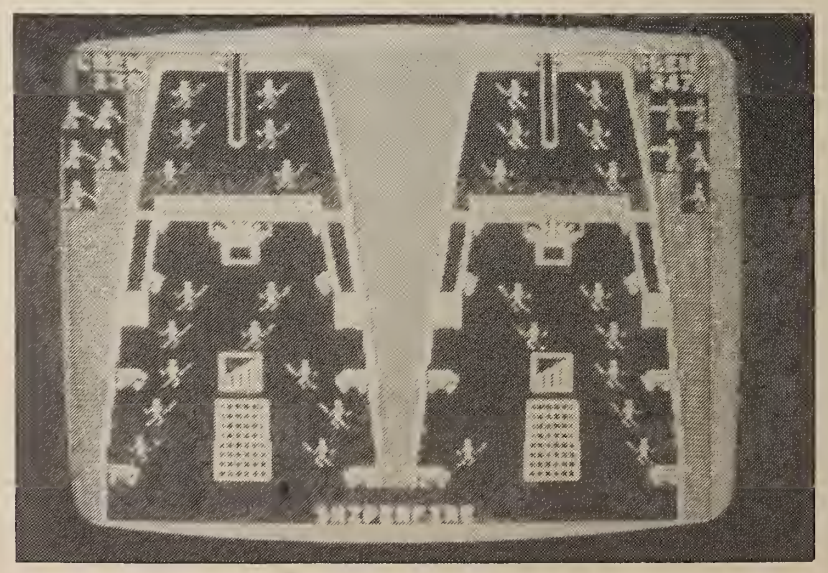
"Three points to port, Mr. Adams" you shout to the steersman.

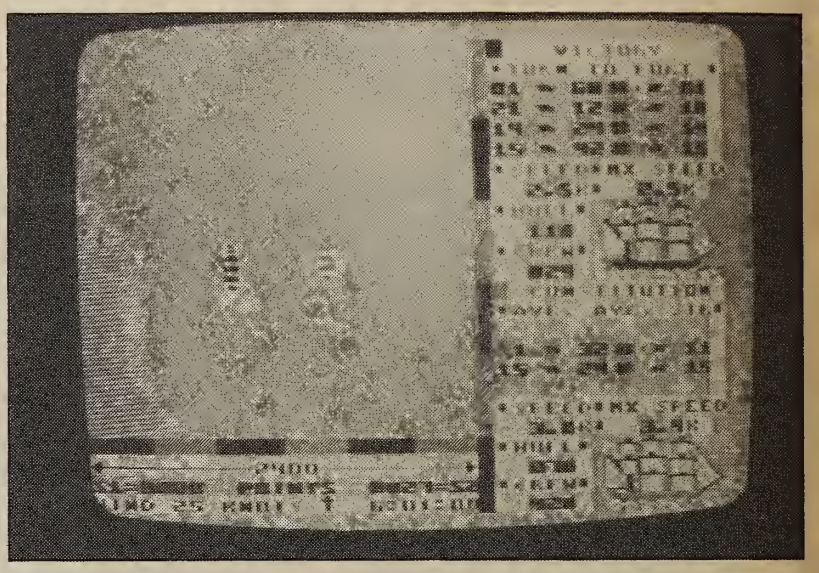
"You can see her better now," states the first officer. "She's rigged like an American." Your heart leaps while you fumble with your scope again and bring it to bear. You've seen its type before when you were on a mission to the colonies a few years after they gained their independence.

"Head straight for her, Mister Adams," Immediately, the ship springs to life as the crew comes up and clears for action. The ship is making a fast four and a half knots and the two ships close with amazing speed. "Load and prime the port cannon." You can make the other ship out clearly now and see the activity on her decks as she prepares to engage you. "Run out the guns!" 1400 yards, the enemy turns to present their starboard side to you. 1200 yards, you see her guns run out and ready but still your ship moves closer on an intersecting course. 1000 yards, any second you expect to hear a sharp report and see cannonballs whizzing across the decks. 900 yards, "stand ready." Through your scope you make out the figure of your counterpart on the opposite ship looking back at you. 800 yards, "Hard to st'rboad, Mister Adams!" The ship heals over momentarily then rights itself. 700 yards, "Fire as your guns bear!" You watch the recoils as the guns fire down the line from bow to stern. Balls rip through the rigging and sails as the enemy unleases a broadside. "Fire!" Your senses are overloaded from the smell of gunpowder, the smoke stinging your eyes, and the sound of over a hundred slashing guns. "Fire!" Part of the port rail is carried away, sweeping men and machinery with it. "Fire!" The adrenalin is pumping through you. You can't help sensing everything is moving in slow motion.

"She's faster than we are, sir," the first officer yells above the din. "They're gaining a lead on us."

"We'll use that to our advantage." you growl. "Load the starboard cannon with chain." "We'll run behind her and dismast





her as we pass." "Hard to starboard, Mister Adams."

But as you turn, anticipating your move, the enemy stops. You turn bow on into her. The ship shudders as a broadside from the American's main guns and heavier carronades rake the ship from-stem to stern. The foremast shatters and falls in pieces. As you pass behind her, you read the foot high letters which proclaim her the "USS CONSTITUTION". The ship shutters from another broadside. This one aimed at the stern. The rear half of the quarter-deck sails past you. You look toward the steersman, but both he and the wheel are gone. A young midshipman runs toward you.

"Sir, the rudder is jammed. They can rake us at will" he spouts. Your heart sinks.

"I'm afraid we will have to strike. It was a good fight though."

For any of you who have dreamed of pacing the deck of a ship of the line, this is your game. The clear and colorful graphics make this truely one of SSI's best. The game has two versions; an arcade one for fast and simple action, and a tactical one for those who want the ultimate in realism. Side views of each ship allow players to see damage as it actually occurs. Many options allow you to pick from a wide variety of actual ships or design and fight with your own. The game can be played with joystick or keyboard controls for one or two players and is available for Apple or Atari computers. So, boot the disk, grab your sword, and see how you would fair in the age of ships of wood and men of iron.

— Kim Nelson

TELENGARD

Design by Orion Software
Published by The Avalon Hill Game Co.
For use with TRS-80 Model 1 or 111, plus
Atari and Apple

Breaking into the male-dominated world of computer gaming can be as devasting for women as warding off some of the demons you meet along the gaming trail. But, while women may never appreciate combat games as men do, we can hold our own when it comes to fantasy/adventure role-playing games and games of suspense.

One not-so-sunny afternoon, I brought out my new game — Telengard by Avalon Hill. The first insult came with the script welcoming me to the game with, "Your name, noble sire." Well, that was a quick fix, and now my script reads, "Your name, noble lady." The game is fun, fast-moving and requires some skill at map-

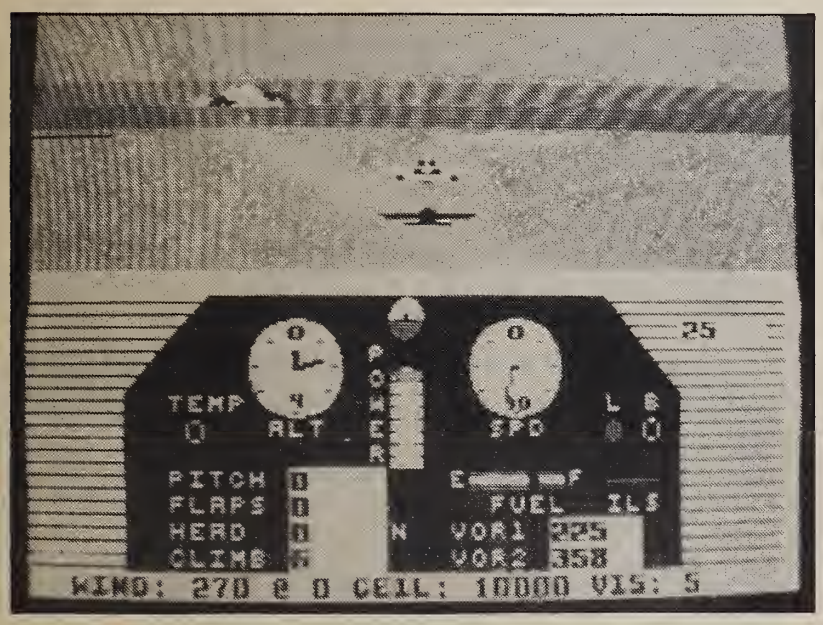
ping out the dungeon floors. Although the impulse is strong not to bother to map, RESIST TEMPTATION or you may never find the "up" staircase and you may find other ugly surprises.

Survival can be extremely difficult even on the first, highest and easiest level of this 50-level maze. The trick seems to be to attempt to survive long enough to collect experience points, move up a level and collect more spell units and other goodies such as "healing potions" and magic swords to help fight off monsters. Evasion works well for a while, but remember that monster has the uncanny ability to follow you and strike at the most inopportune moments.

Another "trick" which cannot be emphasized enough is to learn how to cast the proper spells early in the game. Spell-casting is an art and necessary to long-term survival. Experiment a bit with casting the different types of spells while you remain near an Inn so that you can run up and "rejuvenate" as needed.

The object of this game is, naturally, survival and promotion to still higher point levels. Each promotion makes you a stronger and more fearsome opponent. TELENGARD offers plenty of action and exploration. Try it, you'll like it!

— Pat Hamilton



SOLO FLIGHT

Designed by Sid Meier
Published by MicroProse Software
For use with Atari & Commodore

The morning is cold and biting as you leave the relative comfort of the terminal and cross the Tarmac for the cramped cockpit of your Piper. The engine coughs into life as the ground crew warms up the plane. Today is Monday — that means the run to Yakima. You mentally review the weather report as you strap in and go through preflight rituals. Let's see, visibility three miles, ceiling 3500 feet, turbulence expected over the Cascades. You'd rather be in bed than fly on a day like today, but the mail must go through. The tower gives you clearance and you begin to roll down the runway.

The ground starts to fall away as the plane reaches airspeed and lifts off, giving you that slight feeling of vertigo which you have never quite gotten used to. The plane banks right as you come to a heading of 088 degrees which should put you right over Yakima in about 48 minutes. Well, at least you don't have to stare into the sun. That's something you can thank the gray dawn for. You climb to 3000 feet and the visibility is zero. Better get some more altitude.

Just as you reach the apex of your climb, the plane is buffeted by gusts of wind alternating from side to side, then lifting the plane and slamming it back down. You fight for control of the plane — the engine straining to keep it aloft.

Then the engine starts to lose power. You knew the thing should have been overhauled before this. You bring the nose down to keep from stalling and go into a gentle glide. Down you come — 4000, 3000, then at 2000 you see it. The Yakima airport is right below you. Your heart leaps and you bring the plane down and pancake it right in the center of the runway. "Just another day in the life of an air-mail pilot," you think to yourself as you walk to the hangar.

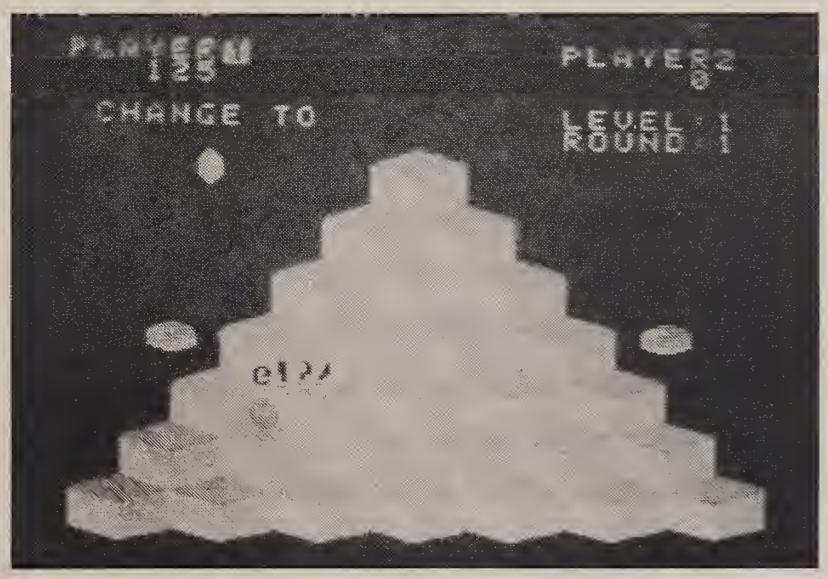
That is but one of the adventures you can experience when you play Soloflight by MicroProse Software. This flight simulator puts you in the cockpit behind realistic looking instruments. The graphics in this program are simple, but clear and easily understandable. Game play is excellent for both VFR and IFR pilots. There is even an instrument landing option, and the mail run game which is included adds a new dimension to the usual flight simulator. All in all, Soloflight will make an excellent addition to your software collection.

— Kim Nelson

Q * BERT

Designed by D. Gottlieb & Co.
Published by Parker Bros.
For use with Colecovision/Atari 2600/Parker Brothers

Just as in the arcade version, Coleco positions Q*BERT atop a 21 cube pyramid at the start of the game. The player must guide Q*BERT from cube to cube, changing the squares to the correct color and, of course, avoiding the adversaries known as Coily & Co. — magically disguised as red balls on the first level. Coily always



tries to follow Q*BERT, but remember he can't hop a ride with you as you board the floating disks (or clouds or flying saucers, depending on your point of view). Instead, mean Mr. Coily takes a flying leap off the pyramid as our hero floats up to the top.

Level 2 brings new problems. Slick, the adversary, suddenly appears and may change the cube colors, forcing our hero to go back and redo the whole thing again. However, Q*BERT can kill Slick by running into him and gain extra points. Needless to say, the game becomes more difficult as the levels advance.

Q*BERT is a high-scoring, fun-loving game for adults as well as children.

— Pat Hamilton

REVIEWS

DIPLOMACY

Published by The Avalon Hill Game Company
For use with IBM PC

Okay, all you Diplomacy buffs. Do you find yourself going through convulsions wondering where your next seven player game will come from? Has the cost of play-by-mail Diplomacy finally gotten to you? Do you have dreams at night of crumbling empires with your conquering armies and sharp diplomatic wit? Well, the answer to your dreams is here. Avalon Hill has just announced the creation of Diplomacy for your IBM PC. The game plays exactly like its board counterpart and allows from one to seven human players, with the computer playing the remaining countries. Graphics are excellent. Each army or fleet is represented by its country's flag over a one line unit designation. Also, each country has its territory designated by a color. As your units capture provinces, the computer changes the color of that province to your country's color.

One drawback, however, is that you cannot negotiate with the computer-operated players. So all computer players operate independently of each other and other players. Still, they do play aggressively and it does make for a challenging game.

— *Kim Nelson*

M.U.L.E.

Published by Electronic Arts
Designed by Ozark Softscape
For use with Commodore and Atari

To call M.U.L.E. a game is almost a sin. The president of a corporation in Southern California called it, "Life, starting at the bottom." The owner of an accounting firm said, "If only a few of my clients would spend some time and learn the strategy of M.U.L.E., perhaps they could turn a profit in their own business."

M.U.L.E. is a unique combination of board-game strategy and computer/joystick packing, combined with educational qualities. There is a great dependance upon simple economic theory, business principals, and psychological awareness of your opponents whether human or computer.

The authors of M.U.L.E. have done a fine job on everything from sound and graphics to documentation and design. This piece of software should become a favorite of yours and the gaming industry.

— *Doug Pencille*

LONDON BLITZ

Game Design by William J. Sheppard
Avalon Hill Video Game Co.
For use with ATARI 2600 and SEARS Video Arcade Computer Systems

During World War II, the Germans dropped bombs daily into the streets of London. Many of these bombs detonated in the streets on impact, many did not. Your job as a Lance Corporal in the British Army Royal Engineers is to find and defuse these unexploded bombs by searching the maze of streets in London.

The blue and green street map denotes your sector of London. Your position is indicated by a red cross. The positions of any reported bombs are flashed in white on your screen. You can move while viewing the street and can see the square you are in and several directly ahead. You can see the bombs only when they are positioned directly ahead of you.

If you take too many attempts at disarming bombs, or happen to be in the same square with the bomb when the time runs out, the bomb will detonate — terminating you and the game. You get credit for bombs disarmed and to be promoted to a higher rank you must disarm more bombs than you detonate. You will be penalized for bombs which detonate. The game ends happily when you are promoted to Captain, or less happily when you are fatally wounded by a detonating bomb.

LONDON BLITZ is a new idea in "maze gaming" with excellent color graphics. A small booklet provides well-illustrated documentation and examples of play. Unlike the typical arcade "shoot-em-up," which depends on reaction time and hand-eye coordination, LONDON BLITZ requires logic and concentration.

— *Pat Hamilton*

KNIGHTS OF THE DESERT

Published by SSI
Designed by Charles Kroegel, Jr.
Developed by David Landrey and Charles Kroegel, Jr.
For use with Apple, Atari, TRS-80 and Commodore 64

KNIGHTS OF THE DESERT, is another in the line of slickly packaged games we have seen from SSI over the last few years. The computer adds so much to each move and to each combat drawn from the 1941–1943 WWII period that the depth of the game is pro-

jected as a third dimension, dramatically increasing the size of the game. The good news is that you, the player, do not have to keep track of the sequence of play nor all of the nuances of the combat and movement system. But don't think you can skim the rules, launch the campaign and let the computer do the work. The strategy involved in the game is not that simple; however, if the cards are stacked properly, you can botch the opening moves and still win the game.

KNIGHTS OF THE DESERT is very versatile. There are ten different levels that range from 38% to 50% of the original historic levels. The bottom line is an almost unlimited number of permutations and combinations, so the game can be played an almost unlimited number of times and still be challenging. I was also happy

that the game could be played to almost any length (twelve turns maximum). A word of warning: Twelve turns take an entire back-breaking day, so you have got to love this kind of detail game. You have heard that, "War is hell!" and this game is a good simulation. If, however, you, like Patton, would think in the midst of a horribly tense and difficult situation, "God, I love it," then the long game is for you.

The war in North Africa was basically a matter of supply: every bullet, gallong of water and can of fuel had had to be transported to the front with great effort. In KNIGHTS OF THE DESERT, this is abstracted into a system of supply depots and supply points that may be assigned to your units. Enemy supplies can also be captured and used. The two ways to collect points in this game are to hold the important cities and the other is to maximize the distance of your most advanced units from your home base. With Tobruk as a supply base, you can extend your line from Tobruk to Egypt, but without it, you either don't pass it or you hang your flank out for the plucking. There are several victory levels in the game which allow you to rate a win. If you lose most of your army but manage to obtain your victory conditions, you will be awarded a lower level of victory than if you obtain your goals with very little loss.

This game is for anyone out there who has a need to refight the British for control of the desert. Graphics are functional, with some problems in readability when many units are "stacked" together. The rules booklet is clear and well-organized. A reference map is also provided. Good luck!

— Don Hamilton

EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

MASTER TYPE

Programmed by Bruce Zweig
Published by Lightning Software
For use with Apple II, Atari, IBM PC, Commodore 64

Have you ever wanted to learn to (ten finger) type, but been discouraged by the seemingly endless hours of boring practice? Well now there are typing games for micro-computers which entertain while they instruct. Master Type is one of the best.

The game pits you against a universe of hostile words. Four words at a time appear, one in each corner of the screen. Each word shoots a missile toward your ship at the center of the screen. Typing a word causes its missile to explode.

If the missile is close to the word when it explodes then the word explodes also and is replaced with a new word. If a missile reaches your ship, your shield in that quadrant is eliminated and a second missile can destroy you.

The speed at which the missiles moves determines how quickly you must type in order to avoid them. The game is adjustable for skill levels from five to 210 words per minute.

Master Type is supplied with eighteen groups of words (or lessons) which, together with explanatory text and diagrams in the manual, provide instruction and practice in ten finger typing.

The lessons begin with one letter "words" to familiarize the novice the positions of the home row keys (ASDFGHJKL:). Intermediate ones use English words of increasing length. The final lessons use upper and lower case letters, numbers, symbols, and punctuation marks. The latter will challenge even the most skilled typist.

An additional lesson consists of keywords from the BASIC programming language.

One of the nice features of this game is that it allows the user to create his own lessons. Each lesson consists of forty words. A word can be as long as nine characters (ten for the IBM PC and twelve for Commodore 64). The program leads the user step by step through the process of creating the lesson and storing it on diskette. In this way, the user can customize the game to better serve his particular needs.

The only problem I found with this game was the limited number of words in each lesson. I tended to become proficient at typing the particular words in the lessons rather than becoming skillful in general. Creating my own lessons solved this problem.

This game is very high quality programming, with crisp, professional graphics. There were no glitches, bugs or idiosyncrasies in the version I tested, and I found the manual complete and easy to understand.

— Walter Grams

LORDS OF KARMA

Published by the Avalon Hill Game Company
For use with Atari, Apple and TRS80

Why would LORDS OF KARMA be reviewed in the educational section rather than in the adventure section? The opening scene in the square of Galconda would obviously lead the player to instantly rank this as an adventure game. However, as the game proceeds, the player is becoming educated in a semi-moralistic way as he or she may be punished, through a loss of accumulated Karma points, for example, inflicting terror on a "poor beggar."

Watching a child play Lords of Karma is an interesting experience. Our children are so accustomed to hitting, smashing, bonking, shooting, blitzing, and otherwise wreaking havoc on all passers-by, that they seldom hesitate long enough to consider that a kind gesture might be more appropriate. Lords of Karma requires the player make ethical choices. The object of the game is quite simple — to go to heaven by attaining enough Karma points and praying in the chapel. The game system doesn't tell you the objective; you have to discover it.

Sounds easy enough, doesn't it? Well, as I mentioned earlier, the player must assess all the characters he or she meets along the way and evaluate whether to offer money or treasures, run away, or attempt to rid the world of the unsavory figures. Searching carefully along your route of travel through the multiple forests, streets, swamps, caverns, sewers, mountain tops, nooks and crannies, you will discover all sorts of treasures and wonderfully helpful devices which will allow you the ability to teleport, ward off would-be villians and accumulate the necessary Karma points. A Player's "luck" in the game will vary depending on his accumulated Karma.

LORDS OF KARMA is a pure text game (no graphics). The game is exciting for entry-level players as well as experienced players. The game has a logical dictionary of word responses and has no major, "trick" stumbling blocks along the route. The educational value for children is inherent in the process of learning to distinguish good from evil. By rewarding good and punishing evil, the game reinforces "ethical" behavior. "Karma" is a Hindu/Buddhist concept, but the morality expressed in the game is certainly consistent with the Judaco-Christian tradition. In a game market that is often saturated with thoughtless, gratuitious violence, LORDS OF KARMA is a refreshing alternative.

— Pat Hamilton

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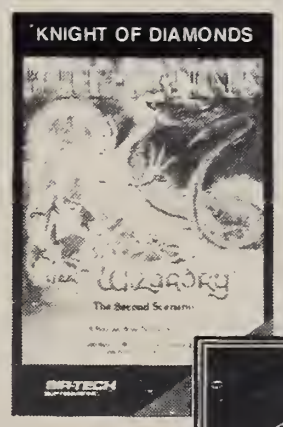

WIZARDRY I PROVING GROUNDS OF THE MAD OVERLORD

Features include: a 10-level maze; 3D maze display; 8 character classes; 5 races; hundreds of monsters, magic items, and 50 castable spells. A 44-page illustrated manual is also included.

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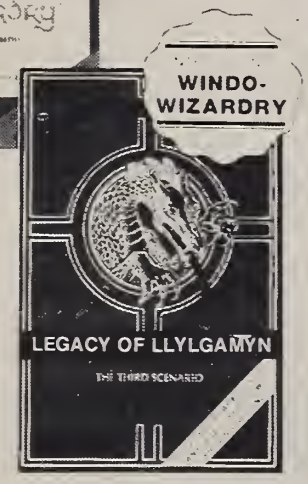

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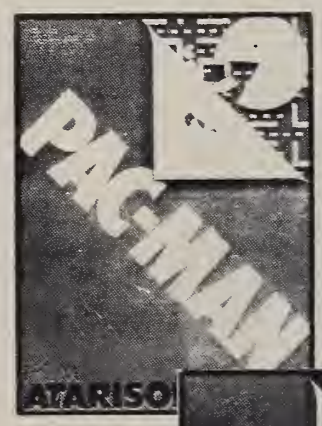

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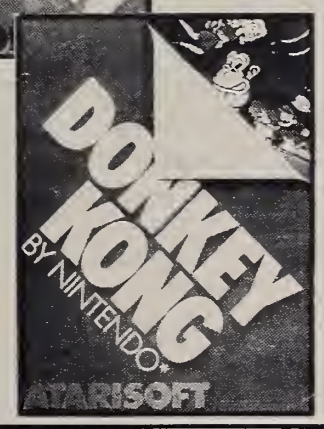

CONVENIENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA
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FREE FALL

The thinker's computer games

By Mary Eisenhart and Bennett Falk

IT LOOKS a little like chess — two armies of dissimilar but evenly-matched pieces, arrayed on a checkerboard-like field, trying to take possession of 5 power points. But if a player decides to take an opponent's square, the chess-like strategy board disappears and the two pieces (called icons) slug it out on an arcade-style tactical board. The conflict's outcome is determined not merely by the cleverness and manual dexterity of the players but by a truly baroque system of the icons' characteristics — lifespan, attack speed, attack strength, attack interval, mode of attack. Woe to the poor bozo who tries to survive by hiding behind barriers — they vanish and reappear at four-second intervals. And the relative strengths and weaknesses of the combatants are enhanced as the shifting luminance of the square approaches the icon's own lightness or darkness. When the battle is decided (by the obliteration of one of the icons), the strategy board reappears with the winner in possession of the square, and the game proceeds.

Archon, the brainchild of Free Fall Associates (Jon Freeman and Anne Westfall, with their associate Paul Reiche III), published by San Mateo-based Electronic Arts and currently available in Atari and Commodore versions, manages to entrance the neophyte and challenge the expert. Combining elements of chess, arcade games and Dungeons & Dragons, the game attracts the strategy-minded, alien-zapping and fantasy role-playing crowds. Since its release in May 1983, *Archon* has garnered rave reviews and carried off numerous computer-game readers' polls. From the first appearance of the Commodore version in October 1983, it's been comfortably ensconced on the *Billboard* Computer Software Top 20. Its position will doubtless be reinforced by the upcoming release of the Apple and IBM-PC versions.

Jon and Anne didn't start out in life to be what Electronic Arts calls Software Artists. Prior to 1978, neither had any dealings with computers at all. Jon, who was working various part-time jobs in Los Angeles at the time, was initiated into the computer world almost by accident, shortly after becoming involved with Dungeons & Dragons. One of his D&D associates bought a computer in 1978 and conceived the brilliant notion of making it tax-deductible by inventing a game. Since Jon was an expert on games (he wrote *The Playboy Winner's Guide to Board Games* and *Consumer Guide's Complete Book of War Games*), he was enlisted in the venture. The resulting partnership led to the formation of Automated Simulations, a company now known as Epyx. Collaborating on virtually all of AS's releases between 1978 and 1980 not only introduced Jon to the possibilities of computer games, it allowed him to continue his beloved — though distinctly non-lucrative — occupation of science fiction writing. With titles like *Invasion Orion* and *Rescue at Rigel,* AS's games had a definite bias toward science fiction and role-playing, and Jon got to work concocting elaborate scenarios.

Anne, meanwhile, was taking math and science courses at Santa Rosa Junior College and developing, in the absence of much formal instruction, a passion for computers. After leaving school, she worked for a structural engineering firm creating civil engineering programs. She met Jon in 1980 when, as fate would have it, her employer and Automated Simulations happened to have adjoining booths at the West Coast Computer Faire.™ After a concerted campaign on his part she came to work for Automated Simulations in the summer of 1980. That October, they left AS and formed their own design and development company, Free Fall. They are currently at work on Free Fall's fifth and sixth games (*Archon* and its mystery compatriot *Murder on the Zinderneuf* are the third and fourth).

So how does one devise a successful video game? Well, says Jon (who, with various colleagues, tends to develop most of the game concepts while Anne, with her superior knowledge of machine language, designs the programs), some people just fool around with their computers until they come up with something interesting. However, "if you're trying to do a very sophisticated game, that method doesn't work — you have to decide in advance what you're trying to do. Games that are good, that have some depth to them, have a very long potential lifetime."

In the case of *Archon,* he and Reiche spent weeks deciding on the various features they wanted the game to have — strategy, magic, luminance cycles, speed — and discussing their feasibility with Anne long before it came time to design the program. Practical considerations of marketability were a consideration — says Jon, "We had saleability in mind — ease of entry, how intuitive the game was, the fact that you only had to use the joystick, you didn't have to remember 15 dozen weird commands. There was enough excitement that the typical arcade-game player would have fun and be rather astounded at the fact that the computer opponent was as good as it was — and somebody who cared about strategy could get into that, and could see that there was something more here than shooting down mindless aliens."

Anne brings the ideas to concrete form. Usually, devising the game's program involves a considerable number of new developments, refinements and outright changes in the original idea. She works out the programs on an Atari as a matter of preference — she finds it well suited to game development. However, after the harrowing experience of transferring the fully-developed *Archon* to the Commodore (the Atari version is roughly 27K — the Commodore ate up 49), she now develops games on both computers simultaneously, working out an idea on the Atari, then transferring it to the Commodore. Since transposing the game from one computer to another is virtually identical to inventing the game from scratch, she and Jon prefer to let EA delegate the IBM and Apple versions of *Archon* to other people so they can concentrate on new games.

Jon Freeman (l) and Anne Westfall play their creation, Archon

Like all EA artists, Jon and Anne are fanatics for quality. By the time they're finished, Free Fall games have been extensively played, tested and refined. Still, inevitably, surprises lurk down the road. Some of the game's idiosyncrasies don't reveal themselves until months after it's been on the market. *Archon* was primarily conceived as a two-player game, and most of its limitations are in the area of its computer opponent. At the time of a game's design and development,

(visible on the terminal screen). Photo: Mary Eisenhart.

says Jon, it's virtually impossible to anticipate every situation. "You can't have the computer do something or consider something that you haven't thought of yourself. If you set up your rules right, they can be revelations — the computer starts doing things you never thought of, because they're implications of a rule that you gave it, but you hadn't taken that far." The computer opponent in *Archon*, which is more challenging than most, turns out to be long on memory and manual dexterity, though somewhat deficient in imagination.

Their advice to someone who's spent weeks closeted with a computer and come up with a great game? As it happens, Jon is writing a book on that very subject. There are various options — selling your game outright, developing games as an employee of some company (*not* the most lucrative approach, though Jon cites the example of the Atari programmer who received 10¢ per copy for doing the VCS version of *Pac-Man*. Since it sold 9 million copies, he did pretty well). To Jon's mind the best option is to find a publisher for your game and be paid royalties, not merely because the rewards are better but because it leaves you free to develop games and leave the manufacturing, advertising, and distribution hassles to someone else — no mean consideration in a chaotic, competitive market where *Archon*, for instance, is being sold in computer stores and record stores.

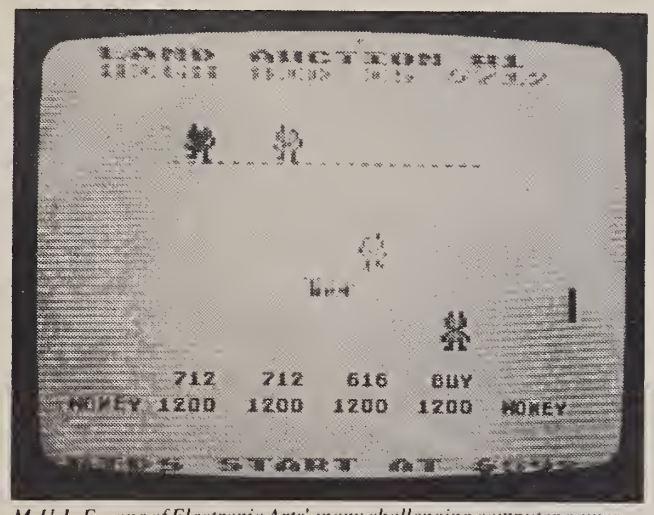
And how to find a publisher? Anne suggests finding companies whose existing work you like and giving them a call. Go to conventions and trade shows and talk to company representatives. If possible, have a demonstration version of your game ready. She says, "When we were trying to find a home for our games we went around to various publishers — we'd make an appointment, go in, and demonstrate the game."

Inventing computer games is not exactly a passport to riches and fame, though Anne and Jon admit that they stopped living on Triscuits and peanutbutter some time back. At the very last, *Archon* seems to have banished the loathsome spectre of the day job from their lives. "To be really successful," Jon says, "the game has to provide enough money to give us a good living. We have to make the amount we'd make doing some other work that might be less fun or more structured, and basically we've reached that point."

BEHIND THE RISE OF ELECTRONIC ARTS

Founded in late 1982 by former Apple executive Trip Hawkins, San Mateo's Electronic Arts has set an industry standard for well-designed, creatively promoted and fun to play computer games. It's first generation of releases (*Hard Hat Mack, M.U.L.E., Axis Assassin, Murder on the Zinderneuf, Worms?, Archon,* and *Pinball Construction Set*) represent genres from fantasy to construction to murder mystery. What they have in common is accessibility (it's easy for even the inexperienced player to grasp the basic notion of the game), fast-moving action, and sufficient depth to both sustain interest and reveal new possibilities as the player's skill improves.

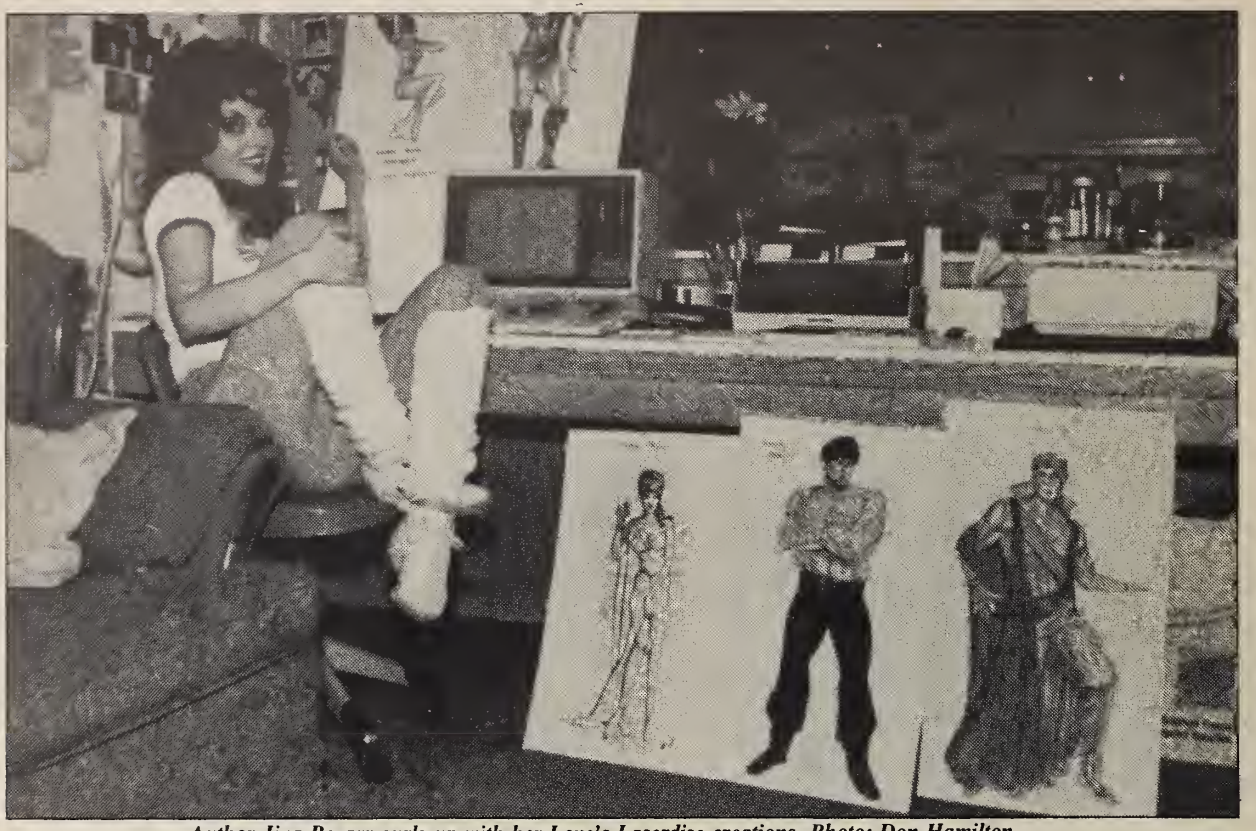
EA approaches marketing and promotion in a manner reminiscent of the record industry. Its advertising stresses the faces and personalities of each game's creators. Further, the LP-like packaging features — in addition to quality printing and graphics and solid information for the would-be buyer — full-page photographs and often whimsical biographies of the authors. By promoting the concept of game designers as "Software Artists," EA hopes to attract a steady stream of innovative, creative people to its ranks. Its supportive attitude is pragmatic as well — artist Jon Freeman points out that EA was a pioneer in the matter of paying advances against royalties to designers with established track records.



M.U.L.E., one of Electronic Arts' many challenging computer games.

EA currently releases games for Apple, Atari, IBM and Commodore, though not all games are currently available in all versions. Since the translation from one computer to another is currently a time-consuming and costly process, Hawkins hopes to devise a method of developing new games on a master machine, which would then work out versions for each type of computer.

LOVE'S LASERDISC



Author Jina Becarr curls up with her Love's Laserdisc creations. Photo: Don Hamilton

Will interactive video romance capture your heart?

By Pam Pescara

SHE'S SMART, daring and beautiful. He's tall, dark and handsome. Does it sound like Debra Winger's next movie? Guess again. It's a hot new interactive video romance game from RDI Entertainment Systems, the company that brought you *Dragon's Lair*. Created by author Jina Becarr for home players, the forthcoming game combines the excitement of adventure and fantasy games with a little spice and dazzling animation.

Why romance? "Romance," explains Becarr, "accounts for about fifty percent of all paperback sales. So I thought, why not have a romance game where you can sit down and play it, when your kid's in bed, and your husband is watching the Superbowl?" Becarr is quick to add, however, that the game concept was not designed just for women, but as something that couples could share.

Selling the idea to a male-dominated staff was not easy. According to Becarr, "There's usually not much of a plot with a straight romance. You meet, you hate, you sort of like, you hate again, you love, you hate again, and then you love. And that's all there is to it."

It was the element of adventure in her script and the potential for player interaction with the game, that finally convinced her editors. "They felt that there were more possibilities," says Becarr, "than just a woman going around and picking up men.

"Initially, I was working with three male editors whom I would give parts to and they would go and play it. They said that they honestly didn't expect to like it. But now they love it. So if you can get three virile young men to not only play it, but to enjoy it, you know you're on to something."

Because the game is still under wraps, MICROTIMES can't reveal all of the details. But there's plenty of action, love, danger, death, mystery, another woman, and of course, Mr. Right. "My idea was to design a game where you wouldn't know who the hero was," Becarr says. "I have *three* of them, so it's not a game where you just find the hero. It's an adventure where the heroine must discover a secret and defeat her adversary before she can reap the material and, hopefully, physical rewards."

The game does retain an important element of all good romance fiction — a likeable heroine. "In some way, shape or form," insists Becarr, "the player has to be able to identify with her. That's why she's wonderful and witty, with a great body — because that's what we all want. But she should have some frailty that makes her human."

And the heroes? "I made all the men very sensual, but sensual in very different ways." Applying the standard movie rating code, the author describes the explicitness of the game as "G" in some areas, "PG" in others, and "R" in the way the heroine is dressed in the animated graphics.

"Writing interactive video scripts is a new technique," says Becarr. "You have to provide the dialogue, the artwork, the sound effects, the complete scene. And that's just the beginning. The major problem is connecting. Every scene must have at least two exits, sometimes three, occasionally four. And those exits have two or three exits, and those exits have two or three exits, and so on. And at the same time, you have to tell a story."

Becarr is presently excited about the prospect of interactive rock video, using live actors. She sees it becoming an important new art form. She refers to a scene from the Paul McCartney/Michael Jackson video "Say, Say, Say." "Imagine having them in a scene, performing on stage and being able to stop the action, have them change costumes, or start dancing, or burn the house down, or whatever, and the combining that with the music. It would be like creating your own rock video."

Clearly, the videogame industry has high hopes for the home laserdisc, with several peripheral devices to interface the videodisc player with the home computer soon to hit the market. Coleco paid $2 million for the home version of *Dragon's Lair*, and is developing a disc player attachment for their game console. RCA has also developed a laserdisc player.

Jina Becarr is enthusiastic about the future of home video laserdisc technology, but realistic about the marketing prospects for a romance game. "Everyone is waiting, and if the game works, every production company in town is going to be on the bandwagon."

LASER VIDEO REVIEWS

DRAGON'S LAIR/ SPACE ACE

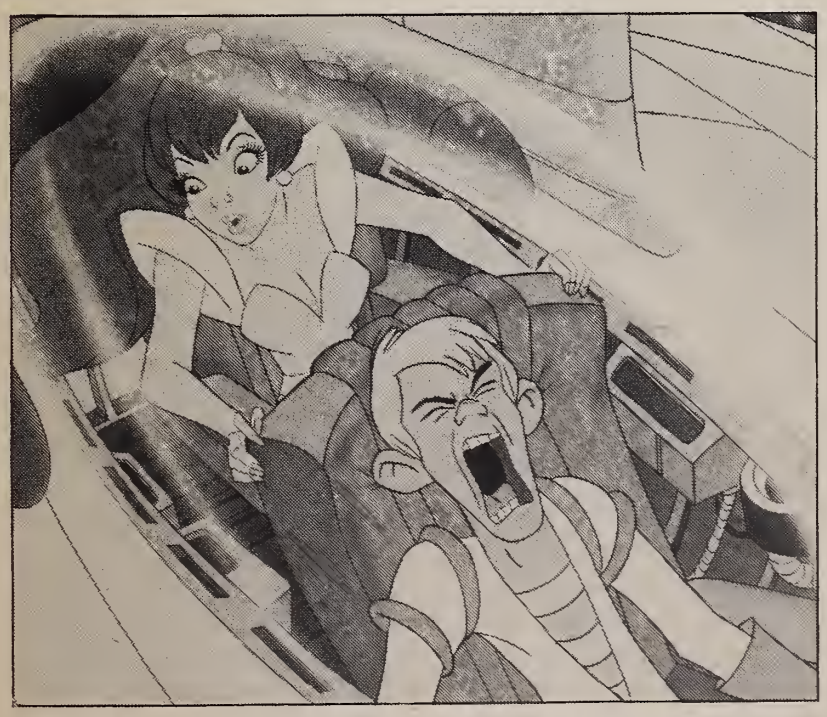
Designed by Don Bluth Studios
Produced by CINEMATRONICS

The laser videodisc is providing a much needed shot-in-the-arm to the rather depressed industry of arcade video games. Using the vast (54,000 video frames per videodisc side) storage capability, and quick retrieval capabilities of videodiscs, manufacturers are producing a new generation of arcade games.

The first company using this technology was Cinematronics of El Cajon, California, whose videodisc games differ from conventional video arcade games in several unique ways. First, they are composed entirely of a series of animated action scenes which are mastered onto the videodisc, then indexed into the master computer of the game. As the computer runs the player through the adventure, the player controlled character will encounter various traps, dangers, and enemies. If the player, using the joystick for movement, or a button for weapons control, correctly reacts to the situation, he or she is allowed to continue on. If, however, the player should fail to react properly, the player controlled character will suffer a horrible loss of life or limb. This literally allows the player to contol a cartoon as it develops.

The second major difference is that there are small time lags in the action due to the videodisc player searching for the proper action sequence on the videodisc. This is a minor distraction though, since the longest time lag that this writer has timed was less than two seconds.

The third, and maybe the most painful difference, is the price per play. Unlike the conventional 25¢ a play that most people are used



to, these videodisc games cost 50¢ a play. In defense of this cost increase, it must be said that arcade game prices have remained constant for almost a decade. Considering the state of our national economy over that time, a simple doubling of arcade prices is really quite overdue. And what you get for your four bits is really incredible.

The first of these games developed was Dragon's Lair (introduced last summer). This game lets the player control the actions of Dirk the Daring, the knight of the realm whose mission is to rescue a lovely princess from an evil castle, filled with numerous traps, creatures, and other assorted goodies. As Dirk goes ever deeper into the castle, the dangers grow even more deadly.

The second of these games to appear was Space Ace. This game involves the exploits of Dexter the Space Ace trying to save the planet Earth and his lovely girlfriend Kimberly from the Infonto (i.e. "whimp") Ray of the Evil Cmdr. Gorf. Gorf has kidnapped Kimberly and is about to use the Infonto Ray to turn the planet Earth into a world of mindless whimps. Their only hope is Dexter, who on occasion, when hit by the ray becomes a whimp himself.

Both games are extremely exciting with many different options and strategies available to the players. In the near future, Cinematronics will be introducing games involving the Old West, ground combat, and many other different subjects. Do yourself a favor and give these a try. Be forewarned though, it may take many hours (and dollars!) to master any of these games. But you will have fun trying. . .

—John D. Gresham

MACH-3 (MYLSTAR)

MACH-3 is a new member of the growing family of arcade games that use the Video Laserdisc as a storage medium for high-resolution game graphics. What makes MACH-3 different from other videodisc games, such as Dragon's Lair, is that instead of using the videodisc to store a large number of animated frames for the various branches (i.e. decisions) of the adventure, MACH-3 uses the videodisc to merely store the arena for the adventure. Overlaid onto this arena (in this case aerial photography) are the usual arcade style graphics that one might encounter (aircraft, missiles, targeting cues, etc.). This allows a normal arcade game to appear to happen in a "realistic" combat setting.

Essentially, the MACH-3 player, after depositing a hefty $.50 a play, choses either a high-level bombing mission (similar to the game B-17 BOMBER), or a low-level penetration mission. The background appears to be real terrain, including harbors, canyons, and plains from the Western United States (i.e. California). In the high-level bombing mission, the player must bomb various targets, such as ships in a harbor (strangely, including the Battleship U.S.S. NEW JERSEY) and enemy bombers on a runway that looks like it's filled with B-52's at MARCH Air Force Base. All this must be done while dodging flak, enemy fighters, and their missiles.

The low level mission is flown against bridges and other "tactical" targets. While the player attacks the various targets, "HIND" helicopters, Surface-to-Air missiles (ASM's), and flak guns try to shoot the player down. The low-level mission also inject some high altitude air-to-air engagements to give the player a rest from the perceptual overloads of low level flight. Each play gives the player a minimum of four fighters, with bonus fighters at various points.

The game controls consist of a single control column (i.e. stick) with an index finger trigger for activating the machine guns and a thumb button for bombs and missiles. The player controls his/her aircraft with the control column. If the player desires, the game supplies an extra set of trigger buttons on the front panel of the game. An interesting feature is the inclusion of a complete set of left handed controls on the column for those of us who are southpaws.

On the whole, MACH-3 is an exciting new variation on the classic "bomb and shoot" video game. The action is fast and furious and the use of actual terrain as the arena for the game provides a realism that quickly approaches that of a visual and stimulus overload.

—John D. Gresham

REVIEWS

The Challenge of Carrier Force

Game Design and Programming by Gary Grigsby
Game Development by Joel Billings
Strategic Simulations Inc.
For the Apple II with 48K

BETWEEN May and November of 1942, a series of battles in the Pacific radically altered the face of naval warfare. For the first time, fleets clashed without ever sighting one another on the surface, and the aircraft carrier emerged as the dominant instrument of seapower, replacing the battleship. For naval wargamers, the carrier battles of the Pacific war have been a continuing source of frustration. If a game is realistic, it tends to become unplayable because of complex rules covering search, sighting, forming strikes and conducting aircraft operations. If a game is playable (that is, fun) it must necessarily ignore or abstract some of the crucial aspects of these extraordinarily confusing battles. CARRIER FORCE from SSI is the latest attempt to simulate this remarkable period of naval history. For the gamer familiar with the period, the hardware and the previous attempts (both boardgames and software) to model these battles, it will be a delight. For the non-specialist, it is likely to be a source of frustration, however. This is a game with a long and grueling learning curve.

CARRIER FORCE is actually four separate games, covering the battles of the Coral Sea, Midway, the Eastern Soplomons and the Santa Cruz Islands. Every ship and aircraft in these battles is represented. Each turn represents an hour of real time, and the high-resolution map screen is divided into hexagonal grid of battles of attrition, victory is determined by sinking enemy ships and shooting down enemy aircraft, along with some tactical objectives (capturing islands or landing troops).

The physical package of the game is up to SSI's usual high standards: a dramatic 8½ by 11 inch cardboard box, two plastic-laminated maps, a sixteen-page booklet of documentation (the "rules" of the game) and, of course, the diskette. In order to save games in progress, the player will need another blank diskette. A couple of China Markers ("grease pencils") in two colors will also come in handy for marking up positions on the maps. The game software deserves a color monitor, and some excellent sound effects are also provided during the combat phase.

Unlike an arcade-type game, which is a matter of hand-eye coordination and reaction time, a computer strategy game is largely a matter of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. We like to think that the Great Captains of history were great because they had a unique ability to make the right decisions about maneuvering and engaging their forces even in the absence of clear information about the overall situation. If a game can put us into the same kind of situation of tension, uncertainty and "information overload" then the hard-core wargamer will probably see it as a good game, whatever other flaws it may have.

CARRIER FORCE is a good game. Anyone who has read extensively about the history of the Pacific War will delight in the sheer mass of information it provides about the weapons and tactics of the period. Early aircraft carriers were vulnerable because of the aviation fuel and bombs on deck. They had to turn into the wind to launch or recover aircraft efficiently. The aircraft themselves were comparatively short-ranged and had only the most primitive means for search and navigation. All of this is accurately reflected in the play of the game.

There are two basic criticisms of the game that can be made from the viewpoint of the game player (rather than the naval history buff, or the technically-oriented software critic). First, the game runs rather slowly, especially during the intervals when the program is moving the Japanese forces. During the wait, a series of asterisks (**********....) print out across the screen to reassure you that something is indeed happening down in the bowels of the microprocessor. Considering the great complexity of any program that can run a sophisticated strategy against a human player and **win,** a few delays in processing are understandable, but it helps to keep a good book alongside your machine to fill in the time (something light, like Morison's *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II*). The lulls in the action are especially noticeable during the night turns, when nothing much happens.

The moments of terror in the game are often the result of hitting a wrong key. There are few computer wargames that punish player errors as brutally as CARRIER FORCE. A momentary lapse of attention, or careless keystroke can cause your bombers to jettison their weapons into the sea, send your planes off in the wrong direction, or (worst of all) cause entire airstrikes to crash because they are unable to land. Some game designs provide little "user-friendly" tricks that help the player to avoid, or recover from fatal errors ("DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THAT? Y/N") but in CARRIER FORCE you are at the mercy of a tricky system, and a reading of all the fine print in the rulebook will help the beginner to avoid many frustrating errors. In one game, for example, I landed a strike of bombers at a base where they were not permitted to take off. They spent the rest of the game sitting helplessly on the runway. It is also easy to send planes off against targets that are just a bit too far away, and then find they lack the endurance to get home. With sadistic glee, the program tells you when they are forced to ditch in the ocean.

Players familiar with other SSI games will find CARRIER FORCE has made some notable advances in the state of the art, although the rigid sequence of menu selections can be burdensome to the player. It should be possible to make decisions in these games by moving a cursor around the screen, rather than typing entries on the keyboard. This would speed play, at the possible cost of more work for the programmer and designer. A routine for saving a game in progress on an initialized disk, and then restarting it at another time is particularly welcome. (Remember the days when a boardgame in progress for days could be utterly demolished by an ill-timed leap of the family cat?)

CARRIER FORCE is also available for the ATARI on 40K disk. For the gamer interested in the period it represents an excellent value for the cost. For the casual gamer, it is perhaps a bit too much to bite off (3 to 10 hours playing time, according to the box cover).

— Mike Markowitz

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REVIEWS

Fortress: Matching Wits with Genghis Khan

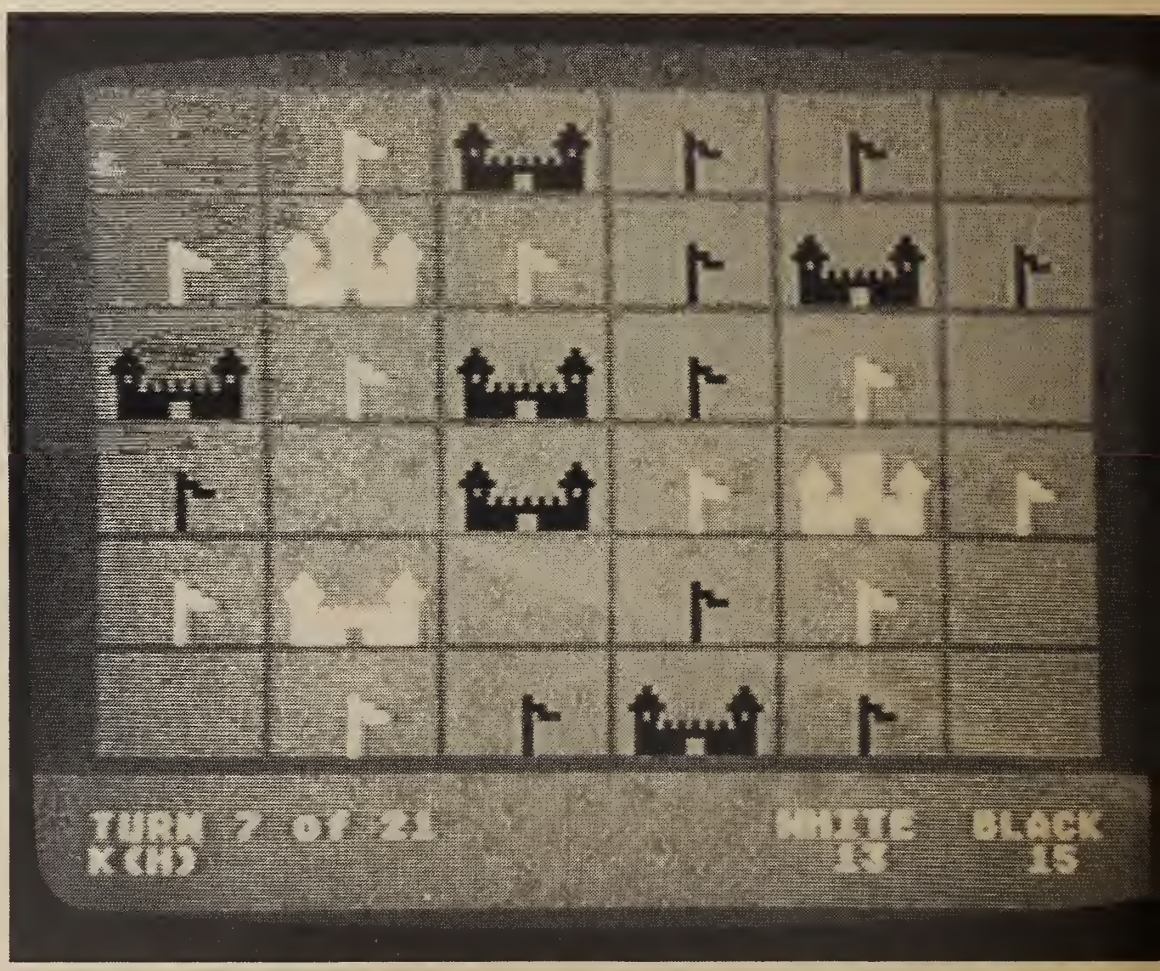
Game Design by Jim Templemon & Patty Denbrook
Published by SSI
For Apple and Atari

IMAGINE sitting across the table from Genghis Khan and challenging him to a battle of conquest and control or, if the mood strikes you, to play a match of defense against the master, Lord Maginot. Sound impossible? Check out Fortress.

This is a game of strategy and typically lasts about ten minutes. Played on a 36-square grid, it, at first, seems ridiculously simple, but upon further investigation, reveals an intricacy and sophistication matching both chess and GO.

The object is to control more squares than your opponent at the end of a 21-move timetable. Players alternate by stationing a castle on any unclaimed square. Each castle occupies that square and influences the four compass point squares (north, south, east and west) adjacent to it. The influenced squares are signified by a colored flag. Any squares influenced by two equal castles are regarded as unclaimed and free for the taking. There are three levels of castle strength. A castle placed next to another with support from an adjacent castle places the opponent in a state of siege [signified by the closing of the drawbridge]. If left unsupported, the castle can be removed and all squares of influence erased. If supported or strengthened, the castle is released from siege and could possibly place the attacking castle under siege.

Sounds simple so far, right? Wrong!! Now choose your opponent. The computer is programmed for *five* different characters, each with its own strategy tables and preferences. You could pick Genghis Khan or Lord Maginot, as said before, or try Sir Galahad, the Squire or Count Vauban. If having five opponents at your fingertips isn't enough, the next option makes the game worth the price. The program has an artificial intelligence feature. At the conclusion of each game, you are allowed the option of updating the opponent's playing ability with the last game. If you so choose, you can place a formatted disk in the drive and the last game is recorded. The next time you play that opponent, you can input all the saved games into his strategy tables and now have a player that learns as you do and improves while playing. No more beating the machine and then becoming bored because you can beat the computer every time. Now the challenge remains and grows as you do.



As if having five historical opponents at your fingertips isn't enough, the program also has an artificial intelligence feature.

There are options in Fortress. A player can either shorten or lengthen the number of moves or turn off the siege warning (closing of the drawbridge) which makes it real tough, similar to not saying "check" in chess. There is another feature which allows one to choose an opponent not listed in the player roster. I haven't yet fully explored this one, but it appears you can name your opponent, then play a number of games and update him after each, therefore creating the ideal adversary. He or she would know your general strategy and countermove against it, forcing you to devise alternate attacks.

For all you strategy buffs out there who enjoy chess, GO or other intricate games, this one's for you. By the same token, it's simple enough to be enjoyed by a child. My nine year old son learned by watching and pestering me one evening and the next day, got up an hour early and played until time to leave for school. Because of this flexibility, the game is well worth adding to your software collection.

—Donald R. Deatherage

CLASSIFIEDS

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Selling a used computer can be a frustating experience. Not only do most dealers refuse to accept them in trade, but private parties may be concerned about the lack of warranty and after-sale support. Until recently, to buy a new computer and rid yourself of the old one meant the beginning of a "computer graveyard" in your garage.

But take heart. Stores that handle used computers have started popping up. Scientific Computer Systems, Inc. of Boulder, Colorado is one of the fastest-growing used computer businesses, reports The WALL STREET JOURNAL, with projected sales for 1984 of $2 million, a 300% increase over 1983. Businesses upgrading existing systems account for about 40% of acquisitions by used computer stores with 60% "donated" by private consumers. Most of these stores sell on consignment and retain 10% to 30% of the selling price.

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